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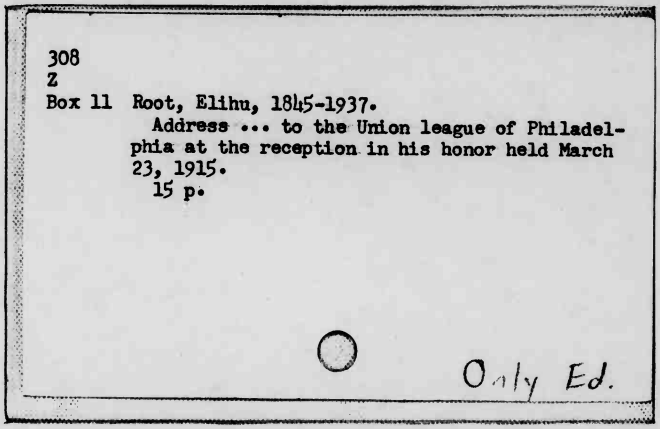
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Address ... to the Union league of Philadelphia at the reception in his honor held March 23, 1915.
15 p.
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ADDRESS

BY THE

HONORABLE ELIHU ROOT

TO

THE UNION LEAGUE
OF PHILADELPHIA

AT THE

RECEPTION IN HIS HONOR

HELD

MARCH 23, 1915

10 sept. 1915. MS

MR. ROOT:—*Mr. President and Gentlemen of The Union League:* It is very difficult to respond to such expressions as I have heard tonight, where my cooler judgment refuses to go in agreement, and where I know that a dispassionate stranger would withhold his approval. Such things as have been said within the past hour are, however, inexpressibly grateful to me, because they reveal the wealth of friendship and the partial judgment of affection.

I did not know until a few minutes ago of the purpose of The Union League to bestow this great honor upon me, in the gift of the medal of the League. I accept it with gratitude and deep appreciation which will continue during all of my remaining life. We confer no titles of nobility in this republic, but we do what is better: from the promptings of patriotic hearts we repay in double measure to overflowing, every debt which we think we owe to a public servant who has commended himself to our judgment as Americans. No title could be worth so much as your judgment; no office could be worth so much as your approval. And it comes to me with all the more weight because I have a sentiment for Philadelphia and its people, and for this club, that has continued through all my active life. A throng of associations compels me as I come into this old club-house to remember the good men, the strong men and the noble hearts that I knew in days past who are here no

more. When I remember how great a part this organization has played in the strength and courage of this great land of justice and liberty; when I remember how much I owe and my children and children's children will owe to you, to feel that you are thanking me seems almost too much to believe.

I had been thinking, as I came over in the train this afternoon, of my associations with Philadelphia, and I found, strangely enough, that of all the dear friends I have known here, my mind went back constantly to McKinley. I recall how, eighteen years ago, I came here upon a telegram to meet him, to talk about the condition of things in Spain. I remember how he said, "There is danger of war; there must not be war with Spain; there shall not be war with Spain. It must be and it shall be prevented at all hazards." Then I thought of how little any one man can do. The tendencies of the mighty eighty millions of people moved on along the path of their destiny, and even that great and skilful man with all the power of his high office could not prevent it. And I remember how, a couple of years after, one of my first journeys as a member of his cabinet was to come here to this club to be with him in one of those great receptions for which you are so famous. And that led to reflection, not upon specific differences between President McKinley and this administration, between the

legislation or the policies of that time and this, but to reflection upon what in the retrospect can be seen to have been a great nation-wide movement along the path of the nation's unconscious purpose.

When we elected McKinley in 1896 and again in 1900, it was the business men of the United States who controlled the election. It was the general, the almost universal awakening of judgment on the part of men who carried on the great production and commerce and transportation and finance in the business of this mighty and prosperous country, which elected McKinley and inaugurated and maintained the policies of his administration.

How great has been the change. The sceptre has passed from the business man. The distinguishing characteristic of recent years has been the conduct of the government of the country by men who have but little concern with the business of the country, by men who distrust the man of business, who suspect the man of business. Measures relating to the great business and the small and multitudinous business of the country have been framed and put into effect under influences which have rejected the voice of those whom they most immediately affect. The railroad man's testimony of what legislation there should be affecting railroads has been rejected, because he was a party in interest. The banker's testimony about finance has been rejected because he was a party in interest. The manufacturer's

testimony about manufacturing has been rejected because he was a party in interest. The merchant's testimony about commerce has been rejected because he was a party in interest. The ship-owner's testimony about the merchant marine has been rejected because he was a party in interest. Knowledge of the business affairs of the country has disqualified men from taking any part in the conduct of the increasing participation of the government in the control and direction of business affairs. [Applause.]

Now, this has not been accidental. It is not a matter of individuals. It has not come because particular men have been elected to office and other particular men have failed. It has been a development of the feeling of the whole country. It has been to some degree sectional, but not in the old way. The men concerned in agriculture, in the main, have come to suspect and misunderstand the men concerned in business in the main. This is the distinguishing feature of this great change which has occurred since we elected McKinley.

It has had several causes. It has been partly because of the old hatred of wealth. Those parts of the country in which all of the people have been of comparatively small means have been filled with men who came to hate the rich in the great industrial communities in the North and East. Of course I need not tell you that this hatred of wealth is more than half mere vulgar worship of wealth. God

knows that too much money does no man any good; too much money is more apt than not to ruin his children and invite for him kidney disease or hardening of the arteries. [Laughter.]

But to the poor farmer on the prairies of the West or the cotton fields of the South, it seems as if the rich men of the eastern cities were living in heaven at his expense.

Another element of this change has been an entire or an almost entire failure of understanding of the processes, the conditions, the requirements and the results of the vast and complicated business by which the wealth of the country is created and maintained. Under simple conditions we all understood each other. Every man of the community understood in general about the life, the business and affairs of the other men in the same community. But life is so complicated now, the affairs of this great country are so involved, that there is very little real understanding by one community of the affairs of another. How can the man who raises a crop of wheat in Dakota really understand the complicated machinery by which his wheat goes onto the breakfast table in Europe, and the price comes back to him? So, through a feeling of envy of the greater wealth of the East and North, of these industrial communities of which this city is a conspicuous example, and through misunderstandings, there has come about a feeling of adverse

interest instead of the feeling of common interest that is so essential to the prosperity and perpetuity of a country. And that feeling has had its result in a series of laws and in the method of administering those laws. We have the Interstate Commerce Commission following every step taken by the great transportation companies. Understand, I am not now criticising these laws. I am citing them as elements—stating them as facts; but forming elements in a general condition to which they lead. We have the Interstate Commerce Commission keeping tab on the railroads. We have the Central Reserve Board of the Treasury Department and the office of the Comptroller of Currency following every move of the banks. We have the new Trade Commission which is empowered to go into your factories and mills and inquire into your personal affairs for the purpose of seeing whether you conform to that vague and indefinite standard which they are to apply to trade. We have the Internal Revenue Collector empowered to go into your personal affairs for the purpose of seeing whether your returns for the graduated income tax are full and complete. We have the Pure Food Law, under which a vast range of production is subjected to inspection and regulation in the most minute detail. Everywhere, in every direction, supervision of business is the characteristic of the day.

And with the exercise of power over business

under the Constitution as it is, comes the desire for enlargement of power, so we have proposals for amendments to the Constitution which will give to the national government opportunity to extend and increase its control over the conduct of affairs in every state and in every locality. That finds its outlet first in matters that have much popularity. The proposal to amend the Constitution by putting in a prohibition amendment, is the first step toward national control of sumptuary laws directing what shall and shall not be done in every community; amendments to the Constitution in respect of the franchise, to direct who in every state shall or shall not have the right to the elective franchise. In general, the great industrial communities of the North and East are more and more being subjected to government control and regulation by the people of the parts of the country that know little of the business of the country.

I say the sceptre has passed. The control has changed, and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that there lies the reason for the stagnation, the hesitation, the timidity, the unwillingness of American enterprise today. You cannot say it was the tariff alone. You cannot say it is the restrictions upon the trusts, the suits against the trusts or the great corporations which are called the trusts, alone. You cannot say it is the Clayton law or the Trade Commission law alone. But the men who are con-

trolling the government of our country today are men who have been fighting the tariff so many years, have been fighting the trusts, or what they thought were the trusts—the great corporations—so long; have been fighting the railroad companies, the express companies and the telegraph companies so long; have been fighting the banks and the bankers so long, that when they come to administer the government of the United States they can't rid themselves of an underlying hostility to American enterprise. [Great applause.] Many of them are good and sensible men, and patriotic American citizens—friends of mine and friends of all of us. I have talked with them personally and they don't believe it, but it is true. Underlying all their actions is an uneradicated but not uneradicable hostility to the men who they think have profited unduly by the tariff, to the men who they think have unduly profited by the trusts, to the men who they think have profited unduly by the control of the banking funds of the country, and to the men who they think have made undue profits or dividends out of the railroads and the enterprises that surround the proper administration of a railroad. And the reason why business does not start is because way down in the heart of Americans there is a doubt as to what is going to happen at the hands of a hostile government. [Applause.]

Now, what is going to be done about it? It is

not something to be disposed of by conquest. It is not something which we ought to be satisfied with disposing of by mere votes. Merely electing a Republican President in 1916 ought not to be enough. The country can't live and prosper with such misunderstanding. The people who are doing these things are honest and good Americans, but they misunderstand a great part of the country. They don't realize that you do your business in the City of Philadelphia on the same principles that they use when they drive a load of wheat to the elevator or a load of potatoes to the nearest town—upon no other principles, just as honestly and fairly. All the glamor of occasional wealth and the magnitude of operations have blinded them to the essential identity of the way in which they do their business and the way in which you do yours. I say that this ought not to be permitted to continue; this misunderstanding ought to be cleared away. It is a question, it is a serious question, it is a question again of preserving the Union, for we cannot live with that kind of misunderstanding between the people of one section and the people of other sections. [Applause.]

Now the first thing which is plain is that the business men of America, the honest, reliable, good, fair citizens who are doing the great business of our country, should become vocal and take pains to see to it that they are no longer misrepresented or mis-

understood. [Applause.] What does an honest and fair man do when he finds that somebody whose good opinion he respects, misunderstands him? He does not try to shoot the other fellow or injure him; he tries to remove the misunderstanding, and that is what we ought to do. The business men of America should wake up—get out of the condition of mind which they have been in for some time past, in which they have taken all sorts of misrepresentations and aspersions, lying down. They should assert themselves; they should put upon foot a campaign of education and instruction for a clearing of the air, so that all over our broad land every American may come to respect every other American in whatever business he may be engaged, so that American citizenship shall be forever for the American citizen a title of respect and regard and brotherly affection. [Applause.] We ought to put an end to the condition in which a number of the people in our country feel no regret at the disasters of the people of other parts of the country. It is not an easy task, for this is a tremendous country. But if the men who elected McKinley will arise to the same standard of courage and determination that prevailed in 1896 and 1900, the task can be accomplished. [Applause.]

We have had missionaries of reform, missionaries of new theories, missionaries of every kind and character, except missionaries of good understanding. The business men of America should undertake their mission to make themselves understood by the people of America.

There is one other thing I want to say, and that is that all this regulation, and inspection, and inquiry into the affairs of the business man, present a danger that can be met in only one way. There is a tendency for the railroads to be afraid of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and for the banks to be afraid of the Central Reserve Board and the Comptroller of Currency, and for the express companies to be afraid of the Postmaster General, and for the industrial establishments to be afraid of the new Trade Commission, and for the manufacturers of everything that comes under the Pure Food Law to be afraid of the Department of Agriculture. It is a critical question for the people of the United States, whether that fear is going to control. For if it does, the power will be abused. There is only one way to meet that kind of power, and that is with courage.

What happens today or tomorrow is of little consequence. The tendencies of a nation are all that count. If we permit by cowardice or timidity; by cringing before official power—if we permit a great body of a bureaucracy to establish itself in control over the affairs of our daily lives, the most vital possession of a free people will be destroyed;

that is, the independence of individual character. [Applause.]

I grieve to see business halting, to see men out of work, to see honest people deprived of their income, to see the pains of contracting expenditure in the household, to see the unemployed on the street; but all of that is nothing compared with the danger that the people of the United States shall become subservient to power [applause]; all that is nothing compared with the danger that we lose all independence of individual character which has been built up through all the thousands of years of growth of Anglo-Saxon freedom. [Applause.] If we maintain that, nothing can prevail against us. [Applause.] If we lose it, we are slaves to the first conqueror. The subject is too high and too great for politics. I would not venture to treat it as a political question, for it goes to the very basis of the future of our beloved country.

It seems now that it is the important mission of the Republican party to reassert the individual independence, the individual rights, the individual integrity of the people of the United States. [Applause.] We are not justly subjects of suspicion. We are not justly subjects of condemnation. We are people of these great states, of these busy communities of industry. We are honest, free, true Americans, and we must not and we will not live in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust.

[Applause.] We will not be governed by men who look upon us as unfit to participate in government.

The mission of this Union League is not ended. Not only is eternal vigilance the price of liberty; eternal struggle is the price of liberty. You have again to strike with the weapons of your intelligence and your courage upon the battlefields of public discussion, of public education and instruction, to strike and yet again to strike with all your power for the perpetuity of the Union, for the continuance of freedom, for the sure foundations of justice, for the memory of the great man who gave you birth as an organization. In your efforts you have my prayers, and always my grateful and affectionate remembrance. [Loud cheers and applause.]

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